



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PAIR SENTENCED FOR VANDALISM TO HISTORIC WORK IN GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Jeff Michael Deck, 28, of Somerville, Mass., and Benjamin Douglas Herson, 28, of Virginia Beach, Va., pleaded guilty and were sentenced in federal district court in Flagstaff on August 11, 2008. They had been charged in April 2008 with Conspiracy to Vandalize Government Property for damage they did to a rare hand painted sign in the Grand Canyon National Park.

Deck and Herson, self-described “grammar vigilantes” were on a tour of the United States from March to May 2008, with a purpose to stamp out typos in public signage and other venues. On March 28, 2008, they were at the Desert View Watchtower on the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. Desert View Watchtower is listed on the National Historic Landmark and is one of Mary Jane Elizabeth Colter’s most important works in Grand Canyon National Park. A rare hand painted sign hangs in the Watchtower. The sign, considered a unique historic and irreplaceable item, drew the attention of the pair who waited for a nearby Park Ranger to leave the area. They then used a permanent marker and white-out to correct what they perceived to be typos in the historic sign.

Both defendants were sentenced by U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark E. Aspey to one year of probation during which they are banned from all National Parks in the United States, prohibited from making any modifications to any public signs and must place a statement on their website educating others about the historical and archeological impact of vandalizing signs in the National Parks. They must also pay restitution in the amount of \$3,035 which will be used to attempt to repair the historic sign.

The pair was charged by criminal complaint on April 16, 2008. The investigation in this case was conducted by the National Park Service. The prosecution was handled by Camille Bibles, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Flagstaff.

CASE NUMBER: 08-04086M-PCT-MEA
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